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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001358

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: FM GANIEV OUT, NOROV IN

REF: A. TASHKENT 654
[B. TASHKENT 498](#)
[C. 05 TASHKENT 2382](#)
[D. 05 TASHKENT 2493](#)

Classified By: DCM BRAD HANSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Confirming rumors post picked up through the day, President Islom Karimov issued a decree July 12 naming former Ambassador to Belgium, NATO and the EU Vladimir Norov as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. Former Foreign Minister Elyor Ganiev returned to his old post of Minister of Foreign Economic Relations. Norov is well-known to Post, as he served as First Deputy Foreign Minister to Sodiq Safaev from 2003-2004. We are cautiously optimistic about Norov's appointment, as it gives us a chance to re-open lines of communication with the MFA. In addition, Norov does not appear to maintain the type of close relationship that Ganiev did with the National Security Service (NSS), which we believe could work in our favor. While rumors continue to circulate that Ganiev might soon find himself completely out of the government, we are skeptical, as he provides Karimov with a useful adversary to increasingly powerful First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov. END SUMMARY.

GANIEV OUT, NOROV IN

[1](#)2. (C) On July 12 at 5 p.m. President Islom Karimov issued a presidential decree naming Vladimir Norov Minister of Foreign Affairs. Elyor Ganiev, the former Minister, was reappointed Minister of Foreign Economic Relations (MFER), a position he held until he moved to the MFA in 2005, and which was vacated earlier this year by Alisher Shayhov. Throughout July 12 several former government officials and Uzbek elite indicated to Embassy officers that Ganiev was on his way out. One member of the elite said that Ganiev was no longer a player, and simply carried out the National Security Services (NSS) orders. She went on to say that Ganiev seems to be a shell of his former self and is clearly the pawn of senior officials at the National Security Service (NSS). A former chairman of the Customs Committee told emboff that Ganiev was no longer in favor and would soon be replaced. This former official, who maintains close contacts with the most influential in the government, said that Vladimir Norov, a student of his and a former First Deputy FM and current Ambassador to Brussels, the EU and NATO, would soon replace Ganiev as Minister.

MFA CONFIRMS THE CHANGE HAS ALREADY OCCURRED

[1](#)3. (C) At 7 pm, MFA America's Desk officials confirmed the change to PE Chief, and expressed amazement at how quickly we learned this information. According to Kadambai Sultanov, Third Secretary at the America's Department, Norov has already returned from Brussels and taken over at the MFA.

Ganiev was sent packing the few short blocks back to MFER.

NOROV: A SEASONED DIPLOMAT

14. (C) Norov is well-known to Post, as he has served as Ambassador or Deputy FM on and off since 1995. In addition to his most recent assignment as Ambassador to Belgium, NATO and the EU, Norov was also Ambassador to Germany from 1998-2003, and to Poland and Switzerland resident in Berlin from 2002-2003. He served as former FM Sodiq Safaev's First Deputy from 2003-2004. In addition to Russian and Uzbek, Norov, a native of Bukhara, is conversant in Tajik, English and German. He began his government career in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) in 1978. At one point, Azimov, Safaev and Norov composed a triumvirate of influential presidential advisers. In general, the diplomatic community, including several Europeans who have worked with Norov over the past year are optimistic. One local Embassy employee, however, was much less positive. The employee, who used to work for Norov, was not complimentary of his former boss, noting that he was often unstable and could be very vindictive.

WILL GANIEV SOON BE UNEMPLOYED?

15. (C) Several former government officials and business contacts tell us that they believe Ganiev will soon be completely removed from the government. They said that in true Uzbek fashion, Karimov has decided to remove Ganiev from the government one step at a time. One business contact said she did not expect Ganiev to be at MFER for more than a few months at best. That said, Ganiev has spent the greater part of Uzbek independence working at MFER with eight of those years leading the Ministry. Ganiev also held the post of Deputy Prime Minister from 2002 until late 2005.

COMMENT: VERY CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

16. (C) Norov is a familiar face. We have dealt with him in the past with varying degrees of success and believe the change should, at least marginally, help our ability to engage with the MFA. Norov is not anti-American. His son Qodir was educated in the United States and is a member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Uzbekistan. In fact, he is in the U.S. as we write visiting American friends. In addition, unlike Ganiev, Norov does not have historical ties to the NSS and is less likely to take orders from NSS Chairman Rustam Inoyatov or other senior intelligence officials. We have heard repeated claims that Ganiev's biggest weakness in the end was that he listened too closely to the NSS, to the detriment of maintaining relations with other influential officials. While we believe that Ganiev is indeed weakened, we are cautious in believing those that predict he will soon be expelled from the GOU altogether. Ganiev is a familiar government face who provides an adversary for increasingly powerful First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Rustam Azimov. Ganiev's removal and Norov's appointment is just one more chapter in Karimov's ongoing game to keep everyone off-balance and on their toes. While we believe this new appointment will give us an opportunity to re-engage with an old acquaintance, possibly reopening a few lines of communication to the MFA, we are cautious against reading too much into this change, as Uzbek policy towards the U.S. is still made at the highest levels.

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